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ABSTRACT

This study examined new teachers' perspectives of the mentoring they were or were not receiving, who their mentors were, types of mentoring they were receiving, and roles played by facilitators at the Teachers College New Teacher Institute (NTI). Data came from focus groups and interviews with nine past NTI teachers, needs assessment focus groups with new teachers, and needs assessment interviews with principals. The general theme that surfaced was that of variation in terms of formal mentoring. Many new teachers were not assigned mentors. Those who were assigned mentors reported varying structures of their individual mentoring experiences. The frequency and duration of formal mentoring sessions also varied among respondents. Both principals and NTI facilitators recognized these inconsistencies in mentoring experiences. Many of the new teachers took a self-advocacy role in their efforts to get their mentoring needs met. Many respondents mentioned a desire for a mentor to model lessons and for more frequent mentoring, preferably from a teacher within the district. New teachers felt that the NTI could better meet their mentoring needs by having former new teachers come and speak to them in varying ways. (Contains 41 references.) (SM)

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Transforming the New Teacher Experience for Success:
Multiple Perspectives from the Teachers College New Teacher Institute

The Teachers College New Teacher Institute:

Supporting New Teachers through Mentoring Relationships

Prepared for the
2002 Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association,
New Orleans, LA

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Introduction

Learning is the heart of educational reform and improvement, and teachers facilitate the learning process. Typically, the transition from pre-service teacher preparation programs to the teacher's first in-service position leaves many new teachers isolated from peer and school communities to face the challenge of meeting their students' diverse needs. This isolation is exacerbated in large, urban districts challenged by a high rate of teacher turn-over. To remedy these high attrition rates, many districts have created or adopted induction programs and paired newly hired teachers with a veteran teacher mentor. Quite often, the induction process is little more than an instructive session on policies and procedures about the "way we do it here," and the mentoring component is left to be as effective as the person assigned to mentor with the new teacher. These practices are problematic because they are not aligned to what we know about constructivist adult learning. "According to constructivist theory, learning is most effective when situated in a context in which new knowledge and skills will be used and individuals construct meaning for themselves but within the context of interaction with others. Experts facilitate learning by modeling problem-solving strategies, guiding learners in approximating the strategies while learners articulate their thought processes" (Kerka, 1998, p. 2-3).

To bridge the teacher's transition from academia into the school community, the learning organization to which I belong, The Teachers College New Teacher Institute (NTI), believes new teachers should be supported through collaborative, on-going, authentic, and sustained professional development throughout their first year. The goals of the NTI are based on what Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) identify as being the features of professional development that foster improvement in teaching. NTI's vision and structure for professional development, is distinct from the purpose that underscores many induction programs. The NTI consists of 15 bi-weekly sessions in which cohorts of 12-20 new teachers work with an experienced NTI facilitator on topics relevant to the new teachers' experiences. The structure of the NTI program supports multiple modes of mentoring. The NTI family and curriculum, interacting in a community web of support, exemplify how crucial people are in the mentoring process. And because people are so complex, mentoring within the NTI is also complex.

Research Questions

In this exploratory and descriptive study, I focused on the perspectives and perceptions of a sample of new teachers to begin to understand some mentoring complexities. I sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the NTI new teachers' perceptions about the mentoring they are or are not receiving?
- Who are the mentors of the NTI new teachers? (i.e., principals, other classroom teachers, facilitators, school/district assigned mentors, each other)
- What is the nature of the mentoring they are receiving?
- What role(s) do NTI facilitators play in the mentoring process?

Initial Literature Search

Induction & Mentoring

Unlike other professions, which scaffold entry and transitional processes, teaching is an "unstaged career" in that novice and veteran teachers essentially have the same work responsibilities. This is one reason for high teacher attrition rates. To address this issue, many school districts created and implemented induction programs to support, retain, and socialize new teachers (Hopkins, 1996; Singleton, 1999). Still, the high teacher turn-over rate did not lessen. As an antidote, many districts

began including a mentoring component in the induction process, pairing newly hired teachers with a veteran teacher mentor.

Since the widespread development of formal mentoring programs began in the early 1980s, there has been a great deal of descriptive research about different induction and mentoring programs. This research has served to document particular programs and the outcomes and effects on new teachers, mentors, and the school system (Sweeny). Mentoring relationships and practices were not studied directly in the 1980s. In the 1990s, researchers began filling in the gaps in the literature (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). However, there are relatively few empirical studies about the complexities of mentoring.

Anderson and Shannon (1988) define mentoring as "a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person serves as a role model, teacher, sponsor, encourager, counselor, and friend to a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (p. 40). This mentor-as-role-model ideal has remained fairly static since its appearance in the early 80s. Yet, there have been variations in how mentors are assigned/selected, what their formal/informal roles are, the theoretical structures that underlie their relationships, how they learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of mentoring, and more recently, what mediums are used to enhance or deliver mentoring to new teachers. These variations are evidenced throughout the many descriptive mentoring and induction program studies.

Despite the plethora of descriptive research supporting particular models of mentoring, there continues to be wide variations and very little critique of how new teachers are inducted, supported, and retained in the teaching profession. By not critiquing the models of mentoring that are already in place, and by not thinking of other possibilities for mentoring, school districts that typically experience high (30%-60%) new teacher turn-over each year, will continue to experience the loss of many teachers who do not feel connected to and supported by their district and profession.

The Politics of Mentoring

Formal mentoring, as it is commonly known today, began in the early 1980s as a vehicle of reform, aimed at improving teacher quality and increasing teacher retention. As a vehicle of reform, mentoring is a component of the politicized process of induction—schools have a financial and social stake in retaining teachers, especially those who are deemed "quality" teachers. The view of mentor-as-model-to-emulate supports a standardization of teaching practices. Research has shown that very little has changed in the way teachers teach (e.g., Cuban, 1993), and induction programs are aimed at assimilation rather than differentiation. So, if mentors, as vehicles of reform, are to help new teachers learn the strategies and habits of mind of revolutionary education, then new teachers must work with mentors who are already reformers in their schools and classrooms (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Feiman-Nemser argues, "If mentoring is to function as a strategy of reform, it must be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning, and supported by a professional culture that favors collaboration and inquiry" (p. 1).

Role of the Mentor

Some mentoring programs position the mentor in an evaluative or gate-keeping role. In other words, a new teacher's certification status hinges on the formal write-ups of his/her mentor. In such programs that "seek to qualify a new teacher for certification and permanent employment, necessitating evaluation of teaching skills and providing programs to improve those skills to preset standards" (Teacher Mentoring, 1986, p. 3), the mentor is seen as someone who can take on that responsibility.

Other programs utilize mentoring as part of on-going staff development aimed at facilitating teacher professional growth over time (e.g., Mentoring New Teachers: The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, no date; Teacher Residency Program; Urban Teacher Partnership: A University/School District Collaboration). "In an atmosphere of care and support, the role of teacher-mentor is to challenge students to examine their conceptions of self and the world and to formulate new, more

developed perspectives," (Daloz, in Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The mentoring relationship is considered a transformational journey in which the mentor is the trusted guide (Daloz, 1999, p. 18). In many districts (e.g., The Columbus, Ohio Peer Assistance and Review [PAR] Program), the mentor's role is a hybrid one, where he/she is asked to both assist and assess (Teacher Mentoring, 1986). The peer evaluator role for mentors is controversial in the mentoring literature.

Learning to Mentor

Whether a mentor's role is to assist, assess, or some hybrid of these roles, it is has become increasingly clearer that mentors need to know and be able to do things that go beyond what the typical classroom teacher knows and does. "Teaching students does not sufficiently prepare one to be a mentor" (Sweeny, 2001, p. 5) because working with adult learners in a mentoring capacity is complex, demanding, and rewarding work that is vastly different from working with younger learners (Koki, 1997).

The idea of training mentors was not derived from studies of mentoring-in-action as much as it evolved out of the past two decades of induction program development (Teacher Mentoring, 1986). Now, many scholars support the "training of trainers" model (e.g., Ganser, 1996; Sweeny, 1996). However, the practice is not universal nor does it look the same in all programs. "Less than one quarter of the programs (6 of the 27) reported some kind of training for the support team in 1998. North Carolina is the only state that requires mentor teachers to hold a mentor license" (Andrews & Andrews, 1998 in Weiss & Weiss, 1999, p. 2). Just as with new teacher mentoring programs, there are many different mentor training programs, and each one is undergirded by a purpose, vision, and set of assumptions. Very few studies, other than descriptive ones, have looked at the learning to mentor process.

Structures of Mentoring

The traditional view of the mentor-mentee relationship is that it is one that can be mapped as a linear process. The mentor pre-determines how the mentee will develop, moving from dependence to independence, and structures interactions that will lead the mentee along this path (Daloz, personal communication, 12/01). This linear view places the mentor as the expert, the protégé as the novice, and the mentoring relationship as one with a purpose for growth and improvement over time.

In a different way, Daloz (1999) argues that mentoring is a transformational journey, marked by development, and thus, it cannot be a linearly structured endeavor. "Development is more than simply change; the word implies direction." It happens in spiraling patterns rather than in smooth, linear ways. "Each plateau rests upon and represents a qualitative improvement over the previous one" (Daloz, 1999, p. 23).

The structures that have been used to describe mentoring and that have been used to design mentoring components within induction programs are part of a larger issue in the literature—formalizing an informal process. "Informal mentoring is probably the most frequent method of transmitting knowledge and wisdom in society; virtually everyone has experienced it" (Peer Systems Consulting Group b, 2000, p. 1). The benefits of informal mentoring are somewhat tacit, and educators have been attempting to utilize the process to attain the benefits. One aspect that has been grappled with is how the formality of the relationship influences the benefits.

Structured mentoring opportunities are not commonplace. According to a Department of Education (1998) survey on teacher collaboration, the percentage of teachers who said they were mentored by another teacher in a formal relationship was 34%. The percentage of teachers who said they mentored another teacher in a formal relationship was 19% (Teachers' participation in collaborative activities, 1999). In contrast to these relatively low percentages, Rowley (1999) found that most veteran teachers experienced informal mentoring with their colleagues.

Is informal mentoring also something new teachers experience? Marso and Pigge (1990) sought the opinions of first-year teachers and their perceptions about the helpfulness of their experiences with their mentor teachers. Many of the new teachers perceived their mentoring

experiences as being helpful, and the areas of assistance they found most helpful were in meeting school requirements and procedures, handling pupil discipline, and dealing with other professionals. However, the new teachers "rated other professionals in their school districts as being more helpful in aiding their transition into teaching than their formally assigned mentor teachers. Most research on informal mentoring has utilized a survey approach. There is a lack of observational and interview data on the topic.

Effects of Mentoring--on New Teachers and on Mentors

A full body of literature exists on the effects of mentoring. Many research studies document the success of mentoring programs through opinion surveys (Teacher Mentoring, 1986). In addition to increasing teacher retention and easing the transition of new teachers into the field, mentoring positions mentors as teacher leaders, an important role in today's complex school organizations. Thus, mentoring can be thought of as simultaneous teaching renewal, benefiting both the experienced and the novice teacher.

Mentoring & Induction in New York

"In 1986 the state legislature established the New York State Mentor Teacher/Internship Program (NYSMT/IP) as one of three efforts to improve teaching. It required that all New York school districts were to have a mentoring program in place by 1993, based on state-defined characteristics of effective mentors" (Sweeny, 1998, p. 1). The state allocated $4 million, to be disbursed through competitive grants, to support the initiative. In 1989, state-wide data revealed an increase in the attraction and retention of teachers and suggested that the new teachers who were a part of the NYSMT/IP made more progress in assuming professional responsibilities than did other beginning teachers who were not involved in the program (Sweeny, 1998).

At the end of 1991, New York's governor cut all NYSMT/IP funding, but the requirement for full implementation of the 1986 legislature by 1993 was maintained. During the first five years (1993-1998) of the program, over 2000 new teachers were inducted into teaching and supported by mentors in New York. As of January 1998, however, the governor's budget still did not provide state funding for the NYSMT/IP (Sweeny, 1998).

Currently, New York requires a year of mentoring for uncertified teachers. In 2004, the requirement will be extended to include mentoring for all first year teachers. Yet, "at a time when mentoring is increasingly considered a necessity instead of an indulgence, there are not nearly enough people ... to go around, especially in urban districts that rely on minimally prepared teachers to fill perennial shortages" (Goodnough, 2002, p. B9). The districts that do not have enough mentors typically are those with relatively high attrition rates, forcing them to hire large numbers of uncertified teachers each fall. "This large population of new [and also uncertified] teachers will be challenged to educate diverse learners in an increasingly complex, knowledge-based, technology-oriented society" (Weiss & Weiss, 1999, p. 1). This is the current situation facing several New York City districts.

There were 7,243 uncertified, new teachers in the New York City Board of Education (NYCBOE) last fall. Of those, 5,215, or 72% of them, received mentoring from the 2,446 experienced teacher who signed up to be mentors for the 2001-02 school year. 4,218 of the 5,215 new teachers had no certification, and the other 997 were a part of a selective program that grants temporary certification while the new teacher works toward the required master's degree in education. Those eligible teachers (~2028) who did not receive mentoring in the fall were supposed to receive it in Spring 2002. Others must wait to receive mentoring until next school year. New teachers, who qualify for a mentor and do not receive one, are entitled to file a grievance under union rules. However, such grievance filings are rare from new teachers (Goodnough, 2002).

The NYCBOE mentors are experienced city teachers. Approximately half of them have retired or are on long-term leave and working with new teachers on a part-time basis. Of the currently employed teachers who are mentoring, only 138 of them are mentoring full-time. The rest generally leave their classrooms for three periods a week to work with new teachers. "Under state and city rules,

the mentors spend one of the three periods discussing lesson plans and teaching and discipline techniques with the new teacher, one period observing the new teacher, and one period modeling, or taking over the class so that the new teacher can see strategy in action. The novices are supposed to spend a fourth period each week observing their mentor or another experienced teacher in that teacher's classroom. The Board of Education used to allow more time for mentoring, but the program was scaled back because of budget cuts in the early 1990's and never fully restored." (Goodnough, 2002, p. B9).

New York City's use of mentoring to support and assist uncertified teachers is one way of addressing the situation that thousands of its teachers are not certified to teach. The in-service mentor-novice relationship takes the place of the more traditional teacher preparation route. The role of the mentor within this context takes on multiple meanings. The NYCBOE mentoring program does not posit the mentor in an evaluative role but rather situates the mentor as being a guide to help support new teachers during their first year.

Some Interesting Areas for Further Research

In the mentoring literature, there are many aspects of induction and mentoring that go unproblematized and are quite possibly fruitful sites for further research. One aspect is the notion that a mentor should be an experienced/veteran/expert teacher (or any combination of these). In many programs, the most senior teachers are given preference for mentoring positions over teachers who may have more mentoring qualifications but fewer years of service. Also, this downplays the role that informal mentoring might play in the retention, socialization, and professional development of new teachers. The assumption that mentors are experienced teachers stifles the possibility that another new teacher might be an effective mentor.

In the majority of the literature reviewed, the mentoring relationship focuses on dyad (one-on-one) mentoring, between the new teacher and the mentor. However, there are many other influences on the new teacher and the mentor that may impact the relationship. Moreover, the notion of one-to-one mentoring perpetuates the isolation that most professional teachers feel in the current structure of schools. "In a collaborative culture, new and experienced teachers who communicate ideas and work together on real problems put their collective knowledge base into action and experience the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice" (Weiss & Weiss, 1999, p. 3). Since 81% of teachers reported participating in regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers " (Teachers' participation in collaborative activities, 1999), how might the one-to-one mentoring model be rethought to be more collaborative and inclusive? The business literature on mentoring has begun moving toward group mentoring (Kerka, 1998). Loeb (1995) suggests that one-on-one mentoring is becoming less viable as competition increases and people change jobs frequently, becoming less identified with one organization (in Kerka, 1998). "Another democratic approach is a trend toward group mentoring in which the mentor is a learning leader of a team or 'learning group' within a learning organization" (Kaye & Jacobson, 1996). Utilizing such a format allows protégés to benefit from the mentor as well as to exchange ideas and receive feedback from other group members (Harrington, 1999).

Another aspect of mentoring that is ripe for further research is that of the medium for mentoring. "Recent developments in a variety of areas—action science, reflective practice, adult learning theory, and the like—have encouraged an expanded range of strategies using colleagues to help improve teaching" (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995, p. 2). The teaching portfolio and the personal professional development plan are two methods being used in some mentoring programs (e.g., Mentoring New Teachers: The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project) that aid in the elaboration, articulation, and self-reflection of practice. The personal portfolio of professional development provides "a constant point of structured reflection as well as a collation point for all the unique experiences, thoughts and reflections that an individual teacher encounters as a career develops, broadens and reaches new peaks" (Ingram, 1997, p. 2). As of 1999, there had been no research solely

on e-mentoring, using the internet as the medium for mentoring. There is research that examined the perceived strengths and weaknesses of email as a communication medium, but the links that can be drawn to e-mentoring are few (Harrington, 1999). "As with face-to-face mentoring, e-mentoring allows a choice of mentoring either one-to-one or one-to-a group" (Harrington, 1999, p. 13). The possibilities for researching the technological medium of mentoring are vast. Some issues that can be explored have to do with utilizing a two dimensional, written communication for complex exchanges of information and with concerns about confidentiality.

Another area that necessitates further inquiry is that of differences between mentors and protégés. Much of the early research (i.e. Levinson, 1978) on mentoring focused on White male-to-male mentoring within a business context. As mentoring becomes more and more a part of education, it becomes imperative to examine how the differences between mentors and mentees influence the mentoring relationship. Daloz (personal communication, 12/01) argues that there are distinct differences between men and women when it comes to mentoring, particularly with regards to intimacy and support. In some of his recent work, Daloz notes that generally for women, honesty is the essence of the mentoring relationship while generally for men, the essence is hierarchy and balance. There is disagreement in the field over the advantages of matching characteristics in mentoring relationships. Ensher and Murphy (1997) found that perceived and actual similarity affected the satisfaction the mentor and mentee felt from the relationship. "Other research, however, showed mixed results for 'diversified' mentoring (Russell & Tinsley, 1997). Some argue that race and gender should not play a role in mentor selection (Jossi, 1997), but mentors still need to be sensitive to different cultural perspectives or mentoring will merely perpetuate homogeneous, exclusionary values and culture (Galbraith & Cohen, 1995)" (Kerka, 1998, pp. 3-4).

Connections to the Teachers College New Teacher Institute

"For when the aim of education is understood to be the *development* of the whole person—rather than knowledge acquisition, for instance—the central element of good teaching becomes the provision of *care* rather than use of teaching skills or transmission of knowledge" (Daloz, 1999, p. xix). Educators who believe in the benefits of mentoring and strive to create nurturing mentoring conditions staff the Teachers College New Teacher Institute, a program committed to supporting new teachers in their personal and professional growth. The mentoring component of the NTI's 2001-2002 program is multifaceted. It consists of the parallel supports of curriculum and the various people who bolster our new teachers in their on-going professional development. The curricular content, based on the research about the needs of new teachers, is rooted in a transformative learning curriculum design to facilitate increasingly complex epistemological development. The designers of the curriculum have always had the people who co-constructed it and who interact with it in mind. These people are the new teachers themselves, the NTI facilitators, the core NTI office staff, the district-assigned mentors, and various school personnel. Some of these constituents have more involvement with the NTI curriculum and the new teachers than others. Yet, one of the program's goals is to build and strengthen community among and between the various constituents. Moreover, the NTI's presence in national and international pilot sites expands the mentoring possibilities.

Mentoring in the NTI attempts to transform the traditional one-to-one dyad model that is structured linearly and formally. Group and peer mentoring are encouraged within the cohorts' constructivist seminars. The NTI facilitator fulfills the experienced teacher—novice teacher mentoring dynamic, engaging in coaching, modeling, supporting, and reflecting roles. Additionally, the curricular project, literacy snapshot, and personal professional development plan activities of the NTI curriculum support the new teachers in their efforts to draw on the strengths and resources of their school communities. Although the predominant medium of the NTI program is face-to-face interaction, individual and group e-mentoring as well as national and international e-networking is encouraged by the recently developed interactive web site. These mentoring structures are meant to

facilitate both formal and informal mentoring opportunities, and the NTI staff believes that through multiple mentoring experiences, more new teachers will have their mentoring needs met.

Statement of Inquiry

The type of inquiry I undertook was a combination exploratory and descriptive study of mentoring revealed through qualitative methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I anticipated that this type of inquiry would uncover rich and varied data about the mentoring experiences of some new teachers. At the root, my goal was in "understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1999, p. 221) in order to understand how mentoring within one context has been perceived by some of NTI's new teachers.

Exploration leaves the phenomenon, in this case, mentoring, open to be revealed and interpreted, and description allows space for data to be explained and analyzed (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Structured and semi-structured interviews in addition to focus groups are means for the participants' experiences, sense-making, and perceptions to surface. Reports on a specific organization, program, or process allow for a detailed, multifaceted report that contextualizes the language of the participants (Yin, 1984). The contextualization of the teachers' responses was done through multiple surveys of a broader sample of NTI participants and through public documents description.

Sample Description & Data Collection

The core study sample was comprised of nine past NTI teachers and myself. However, my role as data collector and interpreter was different from the other teachers' roles. The nine teachers were divided into focus groups if their time constraints warranted, and the others were interviewed independently of one another. The focus groups and interviews were conducted jointly with my colleague, Christine Clayton, who was inquiring about the curriculum project aspect of the NTI. The sample of teachers was selected because they had already had or not had a new teacher mentoring experience. These nine teachers were those who Christine and I were able to contact and who agreed to be interviewed. One teacher wavered and expressed hesitance at being interviewed when her principal was not available to attend. We eventually decided not to interview her, respecting her concerns. Other teachers said they would be willing to participate in the interviews or focus groups, but we were unable to find common meeting times.

I decided not to interview this year's new teachers because this relatively large population (~160 teachers) has not yet had the full NTI program experience, and I was unable to get an idea of how many of them are or are not currently being mentored by a district-assigned mentor. I thought my questions could be better answered by past participants who had already had a portion of time between their mentoring and new teacher experiences to be able to look back and reflect upon them. Additionally, I felt that I had better access to the past participant population of teachers because I had already established some rapport with them at the celebration gala event last year and because there was already a level of trust between these teachers and our organization. At the time of data collection, I did not feel that the same level of trust and relationship had been established between the current new teachers and myself.

I believe the core sample of teachers represented the diversity of the teachers in the city. However, this does not mean that the sample was necessarily racially or gender diverse, for only one participant was male. This was not surprising to me since the past NTI participants were K-8 teachers, who historically are a predominantly female population. It will be interesting to note how the inclusion of grade 9-12 teachers alters the gender ratio of the program's participants. I did not request that the core sample of teachers self-identify their racial group. However, in light of some of the research about differences and mentoring, this might be something I would consider in future mini-studies.

The process of data collection was non-linear. The interview and focus group data were analyzed for themes and contextualized through multiple surveys, past focus groups, and public documents. This sample of contextualizing data did not come solely from the core sample of teachers, but rather, it came from many other present and past NTI participants. Some of the data were gathered but not analyzed prior to the core group's interviews, and some of them were gathered after conducting the interviews but before they were transcribed. The data gathered and analyzed were all collected in one site—New York City—despite the NTI's program being piloted in several national and international sites. This was due to my time and location circumstances.

Needs assessment focus groups with new teachers and needs assessment interviews with principals were conducted in early summer 2001 before this study was ever conceptualized. Although these focus group sessions had been transcribed and coded for themes, they were not specifically analyzed with a mentoring lens until this study. Past program evaluations from the 2000-2001 new teachers were on file in the NTI offices. These had been read but not coded for themes until this study. A survey with six prompts was constructed for NTI program facilitators for the purposes of this study. I wanted to get their perspectives about mentoring and the NTI and how/if they were seeing connections being made with the program, themselves, and their cohorts of new teachers. The program facilitator surveys, informal conversations with two program facilitators about mentoring and my research interests, some of my hunches about mentoring and NTI, and initial readings of the broader mentoring literature all influenced the development of the interview and focus group protocol. The protocol was framed around the who, what, how, and attitudes categories of mentoring, however, each interview took its own course depending on the teacher interviewee. The protocol was followed most closely in the earlier interviews (probably due to my novice) and less so in the later interviews. Also, as particular issues arose repeatedly in interviews, I began incorporating them into subsequent interviews.

My intent was to electronically record each interview to allow me the opportunity to focus on the new teacher rather than on my notes. All of the female participants consented to being recorded. The one male participant expressed concern and refused to permit recording. Prior to transcribing the set of interviews, I had already begun a preliminary, informal analysis. Some of the themes that surfaced in each interview or focus group intrigued me, and I thought it would be interesting to see what current new teachers' thoughts were on these themes. I developed a likert scale and a preference ordering survey for all current new teachers to gather a broader perspective on how the current NTI teachers are viewing some of the mentoring ideas their predecessors highlighted.

Position and Purposes

My role in the research was that of interviewer, focus group moderator, and data analyzer (Morgan, 1997). As a product of a nurturing, solely assisting mentoring program, I came to this research with some deeply rooted beliefs in the benefits of mentoring. As a current full-time graduate student, I approached this study with my beliefs in tact but with an interest in understanding how this particular population of new teachers is experiencing mentoring within this context. For personal reasons, I wanted to see if there were commonalities among their perceptions and if any interesting topics surfaced that I might consider pursuing for my dissertation. For professional reasons—to improve upon the NTI curriculum and implementation—I wanted to learn more about how NTI's explicit and implicit goals for mentoring were being perceived by some of its program participants as well as understand more about the new teachers' needs and how they think they can best be met. I was constantly aware that I had assumptions about mentoring and NTI that would inherently impact how I carried out the data collection. I wrote out these assumptions:

New teachers are not being mentored in the way in which "official policies" state. There is little (formal??) mentoring going on.

The facilitator aspect of the NTI is an antidote to fill this void.

The notion of the individual "expert" mentoring the individual "novice" is not the reality. There is more peer mentoring, facilitated by the NTI's community building component, than formal top-down mentoring.

Making these assumptions explicit, revealed my research purposes to me. Through this study, I sought to (1) understand the complex mentoring issues of the NTI's new teachers; (2) rationalize the uniqueness of the multiple ways mentoring is connected to the NTI; and (3) revise and improve mentoring in the NTI program.

Data Analysis

"Interpreting is not a process researchers do only near the end of the project" (Seidman, 1998, p. 110). I began interpreting when I was formally and informally mentored in my first year of teaching. My initial interpretations were tacit theories I held, that are continually shaped and refined as I gain more experience. I began the more formal process of interpretation in researching and writing this design.

"The researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text" (Seidman, 1998, p. 100). The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and reheard repeatedly. In addition to the transcripts, I had documents, evaluations, past transcripts, and surveys to describe and analyze as well. "Description is inevitably selective" (Peshkin, 1993, p. 24). I brought my assumptions to the categorizing of the data, but I attempted to not predetermine the analysis categories. Instead, I tried to note emerging themes that appeared interconnected. I do not believe this study, in its depth and breadth, was fully worthy of developing grounded theory as Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally intended. However, the strategy of generating conceptual categories from evidence and then using such evidence to illustrate the categories, was used, in an infant form because it seemed to "fit" with what emerged out of this data. The data analysis is ultimately a "re/presentation" (Alldred, 1998, p. 148)—indicating how the research is actively produced by me, a situated researcher.

The general theme the data revealed was that of **variation** in terms of formal mentoring—who gets a mentor, when does mentoring take place, how frequently does it occur, what is the nature of it. Other themes seemed to stem from this overarching one. Many new teachers were not assigned mentors. Those who were formally assigned a mentor reported *varying structures* of their individual mentoring experiences. For example, one teacher said her mentor "would go with the flow of what I was doing or she'd come in and she'd be like well do you want me to do something different or ... anything any kind of ideas, if there was anything that she felt like doing ... the day she was here I kind of went with the things she had different ideas for." This example of a fairly unstructured mentoring relationship contrasted with another new teacher's experience. "We had four separate requirements. One was an interactive an interaction session so that we you know there would be discussions and that we always managed to do. One was that she would model a lesson for me okay and the other the third one was that I would model I would do a lesson and she would observe me and then I could critique me which she did do on occasion. The second one since I never really got her to model a lesson unless I went into her classroom. And the last component was for me to do interclass visitations and to view other teachers." The latter example mirrors the district mentoring guidelines with which both the new teacher and the mentor were familiar and attempted to follow as best they could. The former example, while it does not align with the district guidelines closely, is flexible and tied to the individualized needs of the new teacher.

The *frequency and duration* of formal mentoring sessions also varied among the new teachers interviewees. One mentioned that her district-assigned mentor "would come in once a week... for a period." This was a middle school level teacher. Similarly, another middle school teacher discussed her experiences with an informal mentor. "50 minutes or so 10 minutes sometimes he would if he walked around he would pop into the classroom if there was a problem you know a few times in the middle of teaching so... you know he took over to show me." An elementary school teacher said that her mentor "came once a week. She came half the day. She spent the morning here with me and then she'd spend the afternoon with the other teacher." Analyzing these different experiences made me wonder if the frequency and duration of mentoring is connected to grade-levels and/or class scheduling structures.

The variations of the mentoring these new teachers experienced did not go unnoticed. Both principals and NTI facilitators recognized the inconsistencies in the mentoring experiences of the new teachers with whom they work. For example, one principal expressed her feeling that past new teacher supports were inadequate in her statement, "I think that we need to provide new teachers with a much more structured professional development and support system." One NTI facilitator articulated her perception that her new teachers were experiencing varied mentoring. "Each is an individual perception based on needs so it's difficult to generalize." This statement is particularly relevant because generalizing the mentoring experience for such a diverse group of new teachers is impossible.

I was struck by how many of the new teachers took a *self-advocacy role* in their efforts to get their mentoring needs met. "It was like we had to take the initiative to go out for help." This was not a role I thought I would come to associate with a group of new teachers. Several new teachers went to the district office and requested mentoring, and one new teacher asked for a particular mentor about whom she had heard wonderful things. One teacher shared, "I asked for [a mentor] this year. I went to the head of that department in the district office and I was told that because there's a shortage of mentors." One teacher came to the NTI program as a result of going to the district office to follow-up about the mentoring he was supposed to receive. He indicated how "lost" he felt at the district office, and when he found an NTI cohort in session, he asked if he could stay. This was one indicator that the NTI program helped fulfill some new teachers' mentoring needs.

One thing many of the interviewees mentioned was the desire for a *mentor to model* lessons and demonstrate "how I do it with my kids." In fact, the wish for some modeling or more modeling was indicated from six of the nine persons interviewed. The modeling component was surprising to me; I did not expect to hear that term, and especially not so many times. I then began to wonder why these new teachers wanted to see "someone to come in and model." One teacher's comment made me think about the amount of preparation. This teacher had said, "I would have liked to have had more lessons modeled for me you know more teaching models for me in front of students because you know you can talk about methodologies and all of that stuff on paper and you know listening but unless you actually see it... it just doesn't quite make sense." This statement made me think back to my student teaching experiences, where I did have a lot of modeling done for me, and wonder if some of these new teachers had not had student teaching experiences. I began incorporating the question about student teaching into my interview protocol. Through its inclusion, I came to learn that those teachers who did not have any student teaching were the same teachers who were assigned mentors. One teacher I interviewed said, "I was assigned one [a mentor] because I didn't do the student teaching." Another shared how she asked for a mentor but was denied one "because I already had student teaching behind me." She was informed, "there was no way for [her] to have a mentor" because of shortages and priorities.

On the likert scale questionnaire, the statement, "I did/did not student teach before my first year of teaching," was included. Interestingly, 63% of the respondents who answered the question indicated that they did have student teaching experience, and about 55% of the respondents indicated

that they were formally assigned a mentor. These percentages seem aligned with the *no-student-teaching-assigned-a-mentor* theme. One new teacher wrote in, "as a NYC Teaching Fellow, I interned for 4-5 weeks of summer school prior to beginning teaching in the fall." This same new teacher stated that he/she was not formally assigned a mentor. This individual experience highlights the variations of teacher preparation that can impact the mentoring experience. During the interviews with the principals, the value of formal teacher preparation was also indicated. One principal said, "I've found that teachers who have gone through the ed courses at whatever institution that they're graduates of, the difficulty level is definitely not as high because they have some ideas of different things that they could try, you know they come with that." Perhaps it is because these teachers have had the opportunity to have lessons modeled for them that they have a repertoire of ideas to draw from when once they are teaching in the classroom. New teachers are expressing the need to have lessons and teaching techniques modeled for them. Further research on this theme might shed light on whether the modeling is most effective when done as a component of teacher preparation or when done after the new teacher has begun his/her professional placement.

A mentor to model was one desire many of the new teachers expressed. There were other *desires for mentoring* the new teachers stated, and these wishes can be helpful in informing the development and change of mentoring programs. Some of the new teachers' desires were tied to mentoring in general, and others were based on their thoughts for the NTI program. Some new teachers expressed a wish for formal mentoring. One teacher stated, "If there was something that was set in place of someone I knew I could go to, and they knew that." Another said, "Not a token mentor. Not someone who is supposedly your mentor and you see them every once in a while, but someone who helps you with your lessons or comes in and every week and sees what is going on. Who helps you with ideas." Because of the difficulty identifying who the new teachers are in the city, many of them are not assigned mentors until late in the school year. One new teacher hoped for a mentor who would be "there like in September to help you. Right off the bat to help start getting things into the swing rather than the first time I went in there [NTI] in October."

One thing that was somewhat consistent among those teachers interviewed was their perception that more frequent mentoring, preferably from a teacher within the district, would be most beneficial for them. One new teacher said and many others concurred in other ways, "I believe a mentor should be from this district." A new teacher who was not assigned a mentor her first year mentioned, "I would have wanted to have a mentor who would have been coming in and helping me whether it be two or three days a week." Having access to a mentor so frequently and requesting that that mentor model would necessitate that the mentor not be a current full-time teacher. With such a small percentage of NYCBOE's mentors being full-time, the whole structure of the program would need to be reshaped in order to satisfy this desire of the new teachers.

For some of the new teachers interviewed, the NTI program *fulfills some mentoring needs*. On the likert survey, over 89% of the NTI's current participants indicated that they strongly agree or agree somewhat to the statement, "Talking with other new teachers in the New Teacher Institute helps meet my needs as a new teacher." Moreover, in an interview with a past participant, one teacher expressed, "Meeting other teachers with similar experiences, and being able to work with one another has help me become successful in other areas of my teaching." As a result of the program, one teacher saw herself differently. This was evidenced by her comment, "I have become more confident with my teaching ability I am learning how to teach the children in different ways."

Because of its cohort structure, its participants describe the *NTI program as a peer mentoring forum*. "I was able to listen to other teachers who had similar problems and get ideas for solutions to problems in the classroom." Another new teacher said, "Even during the New Teacher Institute ... discussions and comparing stories and sharing different experiences, that was very helpful

to know that I wasn't the only one struggling ... And I think when groups get together and discuss those things new creative ideas bounce off from one person to another and that was very helpful ... "

The new teachers interviewed also posed some *suggestions* about ways the NTI could better meet their mentoring needs. These suggestions can be used to help improve the program's curriculum and thinking about mentoring. Three former participants mentioned one idea, "having former new teachers come & speak to us," in varying ways. One teacher requested "a mentor from the previous year's cohort." These requests for mentoring from former new teachers and previous cohort members highlight that some of NTI's past-participants are expanding the traditional notion of mentor as "experienced expert." Some of them have begun to think of each other as mentors for impacting one another's practice.

The Possibilities for Mentoring—The New Teacher Institute & Beyond

When asked how he/she describes mentoring, one NTI facilitator wrote, "Mentoring is the act of guiding and enabling another individual. It is about creating conditions where which a person can discover himself and his [sic] practice—providing expertise, suggestion, modeling." Another indicated that mentoring "is a process where people with different levels of experience in an area talk, share and reflect on ways to improve their professional and personal lives." From the NTI facilitators' perspective, people and learners are at the heart of mentoring. The NTI program is a complex mentoring vehicle of curriculum and people that seeks to expand the one-to-one, expert-novice mentoring dyad. The philosophical and theoretical frameworks that undergird the program emphasize that our uniqueness is valuable within the broader community. One facilitator articulated, "New teachers do not all have the same needs. A new teacher is a glass ¾ full! Mentoring support can come from experienced teachers as well as other new teachers. Mentoring works only when the new teacher truly feels he/she belongs." The NTI is built upon the foundation of community in a web of support, and based on such a solid foundation, future possibilities for mentoring opportunities are plentiful.

This mini-study sought to learn more about mentoring from the past participants' perspectives. Throughout data collection and analysis, I realized that other people's perspectives might contextualize the concept of mentoring as it relates to the NTI. Thus, methods were expanded to capture views of other current new teacher participants, principals, and NTI facilitators. These data are not generalizable, nor were they meant to be. Rather, they highlight some of the key mentoring themes as they relate to the NTI new teachers' experiences. These themes are useful not only for the NTI's program change and improvement process, but they might also resonate with others who are rethinking the traditional ways of mentoring and induction.

Strength and Weakness Analysis

One strength of this research is that it allowed an opportunity for teachers to discuss their profession with colleagues without some of the traditional bureaucratic constraints that can often accompany professional staff meetings. Also, the varied forms of data collection provided several means of gathering information on many levels that led to what I felt was a fuller interpretation and analysis.

Since the research process is fraught with power—who controls the direction of the research, who controls the results, who benefits, who loses—specific power issues surrounding my inquiry spanned many levels, some I of which I was cognizant and others I of which I was not aware. My connection to the NTI served as both a strength and weakness. As a current research and program associate, I am familiar with the program's complex curriculum, its intended functioning, and its areas in need of change. I had relatively easy access to the site and the participants and therefore, did not have to spend as much time learning the basics of the site than if I had a complete outsider. However, because I have a history with the program, I also have embedded biases regarding the NTI.

I entered the research process aware of certain aspects of power, namely that researchers and participants are not and cannot be equal (Seidman, 1998). As a White female graduate student who is not currently teaching in the classroom, I was aware that racial and gender power or perceived lack thereof ebbed and flowed in implicit and explicit ways. I attempted to remain cognizant of the fact that the structure I might have placed on the interviews and focus groups might have invited unwanted power into the conversations and stifled the responses I received. Such issues of power can serve as both strengths and weaknesses depending on the purpose and from whose perspective it is analyzed.

Power entered the analysis phase because I determined how the data were re/presented, and as Richardson (2000) cautions, the "'worded world' never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world" (p. 923). My accounts of the teachers were written through me as a filter, and there are consequences for this. I decided which issues were significant in my analysis section, and the questions for further research that I raised reflect my biases. I am hopeful that my awareness of these power issues could be a strength of the study in that it may have helped me be a more sensitive and effective researcher of mentoring. This mini-study was a launch point, and I plan to continue my research on mentoring relationships as they connect to the NTI. The data that emerged from the study and some of the issues that surfaced for me in my review of the mentoring literature have provided me with some concrete ideas for future research.

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